United Nations A/C.1/58/PV.2

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

First Committee
2nd meeting
Monday, 6 October 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Jarmo Sareva ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Introductory statements

The Chairman: At the outset I should like to express my appreciation of the honour of serving as the Committee's Chairman. While I can count upon the capable assistance of the Bureau to lighten my burdens over the weeks ahead, I know that I will also benefit from the cooperation and help of all my colleagues on the Committee. In this respect I recall an old Finnish proverb: "Advice is good; help is better".

The Committee is meeting this year in troubled and troubling times. Too many countries are struggling to overcome chronic armed conflicts within their own borders. Sadly, many countries continue to divert to military uses scarce resources that could otherwise meet basic human needs. Some continue to view deadly conventional weaponry as just another commercial commodity. Some are even alleged to be helping others to acquire weapons of mass destruction, while others may be seeking to acquire such weapons, or are failing to eliminate their own stockpiles. And some are developing new weapons that are not yet covered by any treaty regime or that fall into the gaps of existing legal constraints. This applies to missiles and space weapons or anti-satellite weapons, for example.

Together these unrelated developments cast a shadow over our deliberations. Moreover, they have both contributed to and been exacerbated by the crisis of confidence in multilateralism and the rule of law in international relations. Consequently, the realization of our hopes for a safer world based on collective security is ever more elusive. On the ascendancy is the belief that it is every man for himself and that the only effective means of national defence and the maintenance of international peace and security is unilateral action. Despite the growing lethality of modern weapons systems, or perhaps because of it, one increasingly encounters commentators calling for military solutions to intractable political problems.

These are astonishing and deeply disturbing developments, given the consequences of the total wars of the last century. Again and again we have seen hope yield to fear, a syndrome inevitably aggravated but not caused by the tragic events of 11 September 2001.

Just as no single crisis can fully account for our current predicament, no single remedy offers any quick or easy solution. We are facing instead a challenge that will require many tools in many a patient hand. We must neither turn a blind eye to the very real shortcomings in some existing multilateral approaches to international peace and security, nor, whether out of frustration or out of design, cast aside long-standing multilateral norms and security frameworks simply because a tiny minority of States have chosen to flout them. We must not lose sight of the fact that the overwhelming majority of States continue to fully live up to their multilateral commitments.

We should not seek to reinvent the wheel by improvising ad hoc responses to persisting threats, when many of the potentially most productive ways of

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

03-54304 (E)

confronting those threats rest in the constructive implementation and growth of existing multilateral treaty arrangements, particularly with respect to weapons of mass destruction. However, as the Secretary-General told the General Assembly on 23 September:

> "it is not enough to denounce unilateralism, unless we also face up squarely to the concerns that make some States feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action. We must show that those concerns can, and will, be addressed effectively through collective action." (*A/58/PV.7, p. 3*)

This suggests that we will have to pay closer attention to the problem of non-compliance with existing multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation commitments. It means that time is fast running out for addressing some long-postponed challenges, including the challenge of enforcing norms after non-compliance has occurred. It means the development, or wider acceptance, of transparency and accountability measures to build confidence that reassuring words are finding expression in security-enhancing deeds. It means a deepening recognition among all delegations of the important role played by civil society in providing a solid foundation of political support for national commitments to observe multilateral norms, a foundation that can only grow in strength with improvements in education. It means additional efforts to promote universal membership in multilateral treaty regimes, along with the further consolidation of regional arrangements, including nuclear-weapon-free zones. It also means the importance of deliberating initiatives to forge new norms to deal with evolving challenges in such fields as conventional arms, small arms and light weapons, space weapons, missiles and weapons-of-mass-destruction terrorism, to name only a few requiring urgent attention.

The deeper our common understanding of multilateralism as an indispensable basis for constructive long-term solutions to global security problems, the better prepared we will be, not just to cope with such problems but actually to solve them. We must never forget the inseparable relationships that exist among many of the issues on our agenda. As the Secretary-General stated in his recent report on the work of the Organization, in addressing the deadly threats from weapons of mass destruction,

> "Concerted efforts to promote disarmament, non-proliferation and the security of weapon-related materials are essential for preventing terrorists from obtaining such weapons." (*A/58/1, para. 65*)

We should in this light view the many items on our agenda not as isolated, compartmentalized issues but as security concerns that are closely connected. Progress on disarmament, counter-terrorism and non-proliferation can be mutually reinforcing while opening up new possibilities for progress in development. In considering these relationships and recalling the Secretary-General's proposals for reforming the work of the Organization, we may wish in our deliberations to take a closer look at our own procedures to ensure that we are best organized to undertake our work efficiently and effectively.

As I said a week ago at our organizational meeting, effective multilateralism is possible only if the multilateral mechanisms provide a credible alternative to unilateral or plurilateral solutions. As a representative of a small country committed to the United Nations and to multilateralism, I see their strengthening as essential to our work during this and subsequent sessions. My country's history shows only too painfully what the collapse of collective security can entail. It is true that without political will on the part of member States it will be difficult to strengthen multilateral institutions. At the same time, that political will may be difficult to generate and nurture if the institutions themselves are seen to be beyond hope of revitalization. We have indeed come to a fork in the road also in terms of making our work, the General Assembly's work, more meaningful and more relevant.

The Committee may recall the conundrum: if a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound? We should ask ourselves: if a statement, however valuable, is made in the General Assembly and nobody outside listens or cares, does the statement make a sound? If the answer is negative, we all, big and small alike, have a problem.

It is my pleasure now to call on Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, to make a statement.

Mr. Abe: I am both pleased and honoured to address the First Committee for the first time in my capacity as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

First, I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your selection to guide the work of this important Committee at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I also congratulate the members of the Bureau and pledge the fullest support of the Department for Disarmament Affairs to the work of the Committee. We look forward to assisting the Committee in its efforts to ensure that this session is productive.

Two years ago, just months after the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the Secretary-General remarked in his lecture upon receiving the Nobel Peace Prize that we have all entered the third millennium through a gate of fire. We now find ourselves confronting additional dangers. Some are new and some are very old, but each is the common concern of all States represented in the Committee. This is particularly true with respect to the weapons that, potentially, pose the gravest threat to humanity — weapons of mass destruction. Much of the Committee's agenda over the years has focused on these highly deadly, indiscriminate weapons, and until they are totally eliminated, concerns will remain, both inside and outside the Committee, about the threat that they pose.

It should not be surprising that issues relating to nuclear weapons once again figure prominently on our agenda. We may not be able to fully resolve all the disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control and counter-terrorist issues that will arise about such weapons, but I hope we will make progress at the end of our deliberations towards promoting our common understanding about the nature and urgency of the challenges they pose and agreeing on concrete and practical measures that will strengthen global norms against them.

The terrorist events in Japan demonstrated several years ago that non-State actors could produce and use weapons of mass destruction, and the events on 11 September 2001 and succeeding developments reawakened the world to the horrific danger of terrorists acquiring any type of such weaponry. This has motivated Governments throughout the world to pay closer attention to measures needed to eliminate such risks, though much work remains ahead to address the numerous persisting dangers.

Given the millions of combat fatalities and the enormous devastation that resulted from internal and international wars over the last century involving conventional arms, some observers have questioned the world community's priorities in addressing threats to international peace and security. While weapons of mass destruction continue to pose the gravest danger, because of the consequences of the use of even a single atomic weapon, major conventional weapons systems, small arms, light weapons and landmines continue to account for untold civilian casualties each year. Fortunately, there has been new progress in recent years to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The United Nations was a common venue for many of these efforts and remains a focus of efforts to promote transparency and confidence-building, as seen, for example, in the Register of Conventional Arms and the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures.

In considering our common challenges and the tools available to address them across all these fields, the Committee should recall the advice of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who urged the General Assembly on the opening day of this session not to shy away from questions about the adequacy and effectiveness of the rules and instruments at our disposal. Given the urgent concern about the imminent spread of deadly weapons, it will not suffice merely to recite the norms of prohibition. We need urgently to explore practical ways to strengthen international peace and security through multilateral cooperation. It was in this spirit that the Secretary-General also urged Member States to

> "face up squarely to the concerns that make some States feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action." (*A/58/PV.7, p. 3*)

He added:

> "We must show that those concerns can, and will, be addressed effectively through collective action." (*ibid.*)

As in any system of law, the various multilateral instruments and institutions in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control depend upon three essential conditions. First, they must be widely viewed and accepted as legitimate. Secondly, there must be compliance with the most vital norms and ways to monitor it. Then there must be some credible means to enforce such norms if and when they are violated. If any one of these conditions has not been adequately satisfied, we will continue to face

difficulties in promoting multilateral cooperation and limiting the resort to unilateralism.

Consistent with the Secretary-General's long-standing organizational reform efforts, the Secretariat stands ready to assist ongoing efforts to improve the Committee's deliberative process. The Secretariat, for example, has reduced the number of reports to the Committee by consolidating certain reports that share similar themes or objectives. At the end of the day the Committee will produce draft resolutions, virtually all of which it is likely will be adopted by the General Assembly. My hope is that in a few years all of us will be able to look back at our reports, resolutions and debates and say, proudly, that collectively they helped the Committee to make concrete progress towards achieving the goals of disarmament and international security that lay within its mandate.

In closing, I echo the views expressed by many heads of State and Government during the general debate in the General Assembly in recognition of the important contribution made by civil society in advancing virtually all the goals of the Charter. Whether the issue concerns disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control or counter-terrorism, each of these areas has benefited from constructive contributions from individuals and non-governmental organizations, and I fully expect these contributions to continue. Let us keep both our doors and our minds open to receive such support in all our future work.

Please accept my best wishes for a productive session.

The Chairman: I am sure the Under-Secretary-General's statement will contribute greatly to the Committee's deliberations.

Agenda items 62 to 80

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman: I remind delegations that they should limit their statements to 10 minutes for those speaking in their national capacity and 15 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations or regional groups.

Mr. Albin (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): May I first say how pleased my delegation is, Sir, at your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. Please convey our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. I thank you for your initial remarks, and also express thanks for the introductory statement of Under-Secretary-General Abe, whom my delegation greets and congratulates on his appointment.

The head of the Brazilian delegation will soon make a statement on behalf of the countries of the New Agenda Coalition. In my own statement I will refer to some points of particular interest to my own delegation as well as to the initiatives that Mexico will introduce during the work of the Committee.

Since the Committee last met the multilateral system has had to confront great challenges. My country is convinced that multilateralism constitutes the cornerstone in the preservation of international peace and security. However, today the validity of the collective security system is in doubt. That is the general atmosphere in which our work will be conducted.

As for the issues before us, the overall picture is discouraging. Not only have there not been advances, but there have been worrying steps backwards. I shall point out just a few.

The emergence of new approaches to the widespread use of nuclear weapons as part of security strategies, including rationalizing their use, and the possible development of new kinds of weapons, are alarming. All this adds to our previous, no less valid, concern about the absence of significant efforts by nuclear-weapon States to completely eliminate their nuclear weapons. We remain convinced that the very existence of nuclear weapons is a serious threat to the security of humankind.

Mexico recognizes that preventing nuclear proliferation in any of its aspects is without a doubt a priority of the international community, since this will ensure the peaceful use of atomic energy and encourage efforts to advance towards the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

In this context, my country is concerned by the decision of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Mexico fully supports all diplomatic efforts aimed, on the one hand, at a swift and peaceful solution of the situation, so that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea finds itself, as soon as possible, in full compliance with the provisions

of the Treaty, and, on the other hand, at reaching the objective of a secure and denuclearized Korean peninsula.

Mexico is convinced that in order to create an environment of trust, and eliminate any misgivings about nuclear proliferation, States have an obligation to ensure that the International Atomic Energy Agency can effectively verify that their nuclear facilities are used solely for peaceful purposes. The multilateral system would thus be strengthened and temptations to resort to actions that weaken it would be avoided.

As for the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation regrets that once again we have spent a year in stagnation. It is essential that those countries that have particular responsibility allow the Conference to resume its substantive work. The consensus rule should be sufficient guarantee to overcome the prejudices and apprehensions that keep this, the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, paralysed. The inability of the Disarmament Commission to develop recommendations is also a reflection of this situation.

The risks of a perverse relationship between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction make it increasingly obvious that the indefinite possession of these weapons is a threat to international peace and security. I reiterate that the most effective solution is their complete elimination.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a significant step in the systematic process towards nuclear disarmament, and at the same time constitutes a formidable obstacle to nuclear proliferation. My delegation once again calls upon all States that have not yet done so to sign or ratify the Treaty, especially those whose ratification is needed for its entry into force. The Australian delegation will be referring to the draft resolution which, together with New Zealand, we will introduce for the consideration of the Committee.

Concerning the regime prohibiting chemical weapons, I emphasize that my country endorsed the Political Declaration adopted by the First Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, held recently in The Hague, which confirms the commitment of the international community to the complete and definitive elimination of these weapons, and recognizes the effectiveness of the verification system established in that instrument.

Mexico shares the view that advances in the national legislation of States parties for the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, as well as developments in international cooperation, are important. However, we remain convinced of the need to give the Convention verifying mechanisms that ensure compliance with its provisions.

Given that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of agreements freely arrived at by interested States, constitutes an important disarmament measure, my delegation will also promote a draft resolution to convene a conference of States parties and signatories of treaties establishing such zones before 2005. The draft resolution will seek to consolidate coordination and cooperation between States that belong to a nuclear-weapon-free zone and will aim to promote strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime by increasing the number of such zones. Mexico considers that greater coordination and cooperation will benefit nuclear non-proliferation and the objective of general and complete disarmament.

Mexico supports the consolidation of Mongolia as a nuclear-weapon-free State, and encourages the efforts of the five Central Asian States to finalize the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region. My delegation will also introduce a draft resolution, which we now do biennially, on consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Last July the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects showed that, in addition to sharing national experiences in this field, we need to study in depth issues such as marking and tracing, brokerage, civilian possession and links between illicit weapon trafficking and other activities of organized crime. Bearing in mind the multiple effects of the illicit trafficking in, and possession of, these weapons in many societies, Mexico considers it timely to apply an integral approach to this issue, encompassing the negotiation of legal instruments, including an instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons.

Without neglecting the disarmament aspect, which is the Committee's remit, the international community should tackle the root causes of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, promoting the fight against a culture of violence and gearing its efforts towards conflict prevention, as well as programmes of social reintegration for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

The effective implementation of the Ottawa Convention on landmines continues to be a unique example of how multilateralism can work successfully when the efforts of States parties and civil society are united. Starting with the results of Bangkok and looking towards the Nairobi Conference, Mexico will continue to base its position on the following objectives: first, the complete elimination of these inhumane weapons, which requires promoting programmes and mobilizing resources for mine clearance and for the rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of victims; and, secondly, progress in the universalization and effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention. My delegation will co-sponsor the draft resolution on this item this year.

My delegation is convinced that only a legally binding instrument defining clear responsibilities on the removal, clearance and destruction of explosive remnants of war, and providing for adequate international assistance and cooperation for these tasks, will enable us to reach our humanitarian objective of protecting civilians from the serious risks and grave threats that these remnants represent. Mexico will actively participate in the last phase of the negotiation of the relevant new instrument next November, with a view to concluding a new protocol that will strengthen and give broader credibility to the regime established by the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

To conclude this brief overview of the international situation in the field of disarmament, allow me to mention an important institution established 25 years ago in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament: the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. I wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to its valuable contribution to dialogue, negotiation and the promotion of knowledge of disarmament and security issues.

There have recently been increasingly frequent criticisms of our international institutions and mechanisms for dialogue and multilateral negotiation. The President of Mexico, in his address to the General Assembly, joined the Secretary-General's appeal for a new reform of the Organization, saying:

> "Mexico will make every diplomatic effort to reform and update our Organization, which the international situation necessitates." (*A/58/PV.9, p. 22*)

In the framework of the Committee's mandate it is common to attribute to some institutions — as if they were entities entirely alien to us — deficiencies and a lack of capacity to advance. We should remember that we ourselves are the essence of these institutions. Questions, doubts and inquiries must be addressed to ourselves. Working methods are undoubtedly important, and there will always be room for improvement. We are convinced of that. But the efficiency of procedures will always be subsidiary to the political and systemic understandings needed to make way for an agenda that reflects new threats and old, unresolved challenges.

The multilateralism to which we aspire rests on three pillars — dialogue, negotiation and law. We must give priority to diplomatic action and agreement. The axis of our determination is shared responsibility. Mexico will remain ready to do its share.

Mr. Trezza (Italy): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that you will guide us through the Committee's work in an excellent way. I assure you of our wholehearted support in the discharge of your important responsibilities. I also acknowledge the presence of Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe and thank him in advance for the assistance that he and his collaborators will give to our meetings.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) country, Norway, member of the European Economic Area (EEA), align themselves with this statement.

Let me first mention the Declaration on Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction adopted by the European Union heads of State and Government at the Thessaloniki European Council meeting on 20 June, which stresses that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and means of delivery, such as ballistic missiles, is a growing threat to international peace and security. Many of the issues that are dealt with in that Declaration are of interest to the Committee.

The European Union is committed to elaborating a coherent strategy to address the threat of proliferation. The European approach is guided by the commitment to uphold and implement multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements, and by support for the multilateral institutions charged respectively with verification and upholding compliance with these treaties.

To implement the Action Plan established last June, the European Union has decided to focus its efforts on a number of measures. I enumerate those of greatest relevance to the Committee, as follows: further universalizing the key disarmament and non-proliferation treaties, agreements and arrangements; promoting national implementation of relevant treaty obligations; enhancing the European Union political, financial and technical support for agencies in charge of verification; fostering the role of the United Nations Security Council and enhancing its expertise in meeting the challenge of proliferation; and reinforcing European Union cooperative threat-reduction programmes with third countries, targeted at support for disarmament, control and security of sensitive materials, facilities and expertise.

The European Union regards the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament under article VI. The Treaty does not prevent the application of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. All our efforts should be aimed at preserving and strengthening this fundamental instrument of international peace and security. The European Union supports wholeheartedly the objectives laid down in the Treaty, and is committed to the effective implementation of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and the decisions and the resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

The EU welcomes the accession of Timor-Leste and Cuba to the NPT and the latter's ratification of the Tlatelolco Treaty, a further step towards universalization. The EU continues to attach special importance to achieving universal adherence to the NPT, and calls on India and Pakistan to fully comply with Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) and accede as non-nuclear-weapon States to the NPT. We also call on Israel to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State.

We have also witnessed developments that could weaken the Treaty. The European Union deeply deplores the announcement last year by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its intention to withdraw from the NPT and its subsequent acts and statements challenging the non-proliferation regime. The European Union continues to urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reconsider its course of action.

The international safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the fundamental pillar of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. The European Union considers that the additional protocols are an integral part of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system, and that adherence to them should be considered an essential means of demonstrating the fulfilment of obligations of States parties under article III of the NPT. The European Union considers that the IAEA comprehensive safeguards, including the additional protocol, constitute the verification standard, and accords a high priority to its implementation. All members of the European Union have signed additional protocols, and have either ratified them or are in the process of doing so, and we are determined to bring them into force by the end of 2003. We call on all States that have not yet done so to conclude and bring into force additional protocols with the IAEA.

The Iranian nuclear programme remains a matter of grave concern for the European Union, which fully supports the resolution by the IAEA Board of Governors on the matter and calls on Iran to immediately comply with all requirements of the resolution and fully cooperate with the IAEA to enable the Board to draw definitive conclusions at its next meeting in November. The European Union welcomes Iran's stated willingness to cooperate with the IAEA and hopes that Iran will sign, ratify and implement the additional protocol without delay as a first and

essential step to restoring international trust in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. The European Union urges Iran to act — in order to build confidence — in accordance with the provisions of the additional protocol with immediate effect, and to refrain from fuel cycle activities that can also be used to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons.

The European Union reiterates that it spares no effort in promoting the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and universal accession to it. In connection with the third Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which took place in Vienna from 3 to 5 September last, the European Union, on the basis of its renewed common position, carried out démarches in 74 countries. We welcome the fact that Algeria, as one of the countries named in annex 2 to the Treaty, deposited its instruments of ratification before the Conference. To ensure that the resolve of the international community does not weaken, the European Union continues to call on all those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT, without delay and without conditions, in particular those States whose ratification is required for the Treaty to enter into force. It is with this in mind that the Union expresses its full support for the rapid establishment of all elements of the verification regime.

The European Union attaches the utmost importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), a unique instrument for working towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. It is for this reason that we decided to engage in a wide effort to explain to those countries that have not adhered to it its relevance in strengthening international peace and security and the importance of its universalization. In this context, the European Union recalls articles IV and V of the Convention, obliging relevant States to destroy all their chemical weapons, and calls on them to fulfil their obligations in compliance with the agreed deadlines. We are fully aware of the difficulties that some States parties to the Convention face in meeting that obligation. We therefore expect them to cooperate fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and all Member States to allow any decision on the postponement of those deadlines.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) is a key instrument to prevent biological agents or toxins from being developed, produced, stockpiled or used as weapons. The European Union attaches great importance to the strengthening of the Convention and to a successful outcome of the meeting of States parties to be held in Geneva in November. Member States of the Union consider the issue of national compliance and legislative and regulatory implementation measures to be priorities, and support proposals to strengthen such measures. The Union expresses a positive judgement on the BTWC expert meeting which took place in Geneva from 18 to 29 August last, when a great deal of information on national legislation and national mechanisms on security was exchanged. At the forthcoming meeting of States parties the Union will strongly favour an agreement on a core package of legislation that all States parties should have in place, effectively covering both national implementation of BTWC obligations and security and oversight of the handling of pathogens.

The European Union attaches special importance to the negotiation of a non-discriminatory and universal treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The banning of the production of such material would strengthen both nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and thus international security. The Union and its member States have actively worked in the Conference on Disarmament in the search for a consensus to launch the negotiation, on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator and the mandate it contains, of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We reiterate our call to the members of the Conference on Disarmament to make every effort to attain that objective as soon as possible.

The European Union regrets the ongoing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and is convinced that the new threats to peace and security require that this standstill be overcome as soon as possible. The Union is committed to reaching a consensus on a programme of work in the Conference, and welcomes the fact that new ideas have been put forward over the past year. We appreciate these efforts aimed at promoting consensus for a programme of work. We urge the Conference to start substantive work from the outset of the first session in 2004. In this

respect, we support efforts by the current and incoming presidency during the intersessional period.

The Union recalls its attachment to the follow-up of the enlargement process of the Conference on Disarmament. A follow-up on this process is of great importance, in particular to those members of the Union that are not yet members of the Conference, as well as the acceding countries that have submitted their request for admission to the Conference.

The European Union attaches great importance to the development and strengthening, wherever possible, of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones based on arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region. Nuclear-weapon-free zones enhance regional and global peace and security, and are a means to promote nuclear disarmament, stability and confidence. We welcome and support the signature and ratification by the nuclear-weapon States of the relevant protocols of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and look forward to the entry into force of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty at an early date.

The European Union welcomes the adoption in The Hague last year of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. The Code also confirms the commitment by subscribing States to the United Nations Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interest of All States, Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries. The Union considers the Hague Code of Conduct to be an initial, essential step to effectively address the problem from a multilateral, global perspective, without precluding other initiatives or, in the longer term, more comprehensive approaches. The Union believes that a relationship between the Code and the United Nations should be established.

In the Thessaloniki Declaration the European Union members recognize that

> "appropriate steps towards the goal of general and complete disarmament can contribute to furthering non-proliferation objectives"

and say that they are

> "determined to play our part in addressing the problems of regional instability and insecurity and the situations of conflict which lie behind many weapons programmes, recognizing that instability does not occur in a vacuum."

While welcoming the six-party talks recently held in Beijing on the nuclear programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the European Union is alarmed that it has still not been possible for the IAEA to verify the completeness and correctness of the initial Democratic People's Republic of Korea report of its nuclear material for non-peaceful uses. The Union notes that the IAEA Board of Governors has reported to the Security Council further non-compliance by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with its safeguards agreements. We strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to visibly, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle any nuclear programme, a fundamental step to facilitate a comprehensive and peaceful solution. The Union calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by its obligations under the NPT and fully cooperate with the IAEA, and repeats its appeal to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify unconditionally the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Finally, the Union also notes with interest the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's stated commitment to continue its moratorium on missile testing, but expresses its concern with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's exports of missiles and missile technology.

We renew our appeal to the countries of South Asia to make every effort to stop an arms race in the region. We continue to urge India and Pakistan to cooperate in the efforts of the international community to contribute positively to the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We have called on them to implement the specific measures set out in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998), in particular acceding to the NPT and the signing and ratification of the CTBT. We also ask them to reaffirm and maintain their declared moratoriums on nuclear testing and their willingness to participate in the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The European Union remains committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolutions on the Middle East and the resolution of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. We continue to support efforts to establish an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means. Furthermore, we call on all States in the region that have not yet done so to sign

and bring into force safeguards agreements and additional protocols with the IAEA as soon as possible. The Union believes that in addition to the accession of all States in the region to the NPT, accession to the Conventions banning chemical and biological weapons should be actively pursued.

The European Union believes that the July 2003 Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons had positive and useful results. The Meeting demonstrated a strong political will among the participants to successfully maintain this important process within a multilateral framework.

The European Union and its member States can legitimately claim to be at the forefront of the fight against the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. We believe that the momentum of the United Nations Programme of Action should be maintained and enhanced. The European Union welcomes the recommendations of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on the feasibility of a multilateral instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons, and also supports the adoption of a mandate to establish an open-ended working group with a view to negotiating a legally binding instrument. The Union also supports closer cooperation in order to prevent illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. A United Nations definition of small arms and light weapons should be worked out. The requirements for an effective national end-user certificate system and the feasibility, as appropriate, of developing an end-user certificate system for small arms and light weapons at the regional and global level, as well as an information exchange and verification mechanism, should be examined. The Union attaches great importance to a successful second Biennial Meeting in 2005 and a Review Conference in 2006. The Union intends to propose a European Union member State to chair the 2005 meeting.

The European Union underlines the importance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a global transparency and confidence-building measure to support stability and security, which has enabled many Governments to develop and simplify their national systems for monitoring and controlling arms transfers. The value of the Register will be increased by as large a participation as possible. The Union reiterates its call on all States to submit timely returns to the Register of their imports and exports, including information on military holdings and procurement through national production. The Union welcomes the recommendations of the relevant Group of Governmental Experts, including, in particular, those relating to expanding the scope of the Register — the first time in its 11 years of operation.

Ratification by 139 States and signature by 11 additional States that have not yet ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction leaves no doubt that an international norm has been established that can no longer be ignored. The Union remains strongly committed to promoting the global eradication of anti-personnel mines and continues to campaign for a universal and swift application of the Convention.

The European Union is committed to universalizing the mine-ban Convention, and has carried out numerous démarches to promote the widest adherence to the principles of the Convention. The Union urges States that are not parties to accede to the Convention. Among them are some of the biggest and most populated countries in the world. The Union promotes the full implementation of all provisions of the Convention, including those providing for undiminished financial support for mine action. The European Community has pledged €240 million in support of mine action for the period 2002-2009, an effort complemented by substantial national funding by Union member States.

The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) is an essential and integral part of international humanitarian law, and the European Union attaches great importance to it. The Union is particularly concerned about the serious humanitarian impact of the explosive remnants of war, and will strive to ensure that ongoing negotiations in Geneva lead as soon as possible to the adoption of a multilateral legally binding instrument.

We are also concerned about the serious humanitarian risks caused by the irresponsible use of anti-vehicle mines. These weapons cause civilian casualties and hamper the economic development of affected areas. Therefore, we hope that a mandate for negotiating a legally binding instrument will be agreed

at the next meeting of States parties to the CCW in November. The Union also attaches great importance to the establishment of an overall mechanism for addressing compliance with the CCW.

In view of the enhanced proliferation threat, the European Union finds it necessary that exporting States assume their responsibilities and take measures to ensure that exports of sensitive materials, equipment and technologies are subject to appropriate surveillance and control. Export controls ensure that transfers take place for peaceful purposes as required by the relevant conventions and treaties, facilitating also cooperation and technological development. Therefore, the Union will focus — as is stated in the Thessaloniki Declaration — on strengthening export control policies and practices within the European Union and beyond, in coordination with partners.

Finally, in the First Committee we need to maintain a balanced agenda that reflects important goals and objectives and is able to react to, and focus upon, today's most immediate problems. Here we include, for example, the non-proliferation and disarmament challenges facing international treaties today, the question of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

We believe that the working methods of the First Committee could be streamlined to the benefit of us all. The Union will support your efforts, Mr. Chairman, to make the work more effective and relevant so that the Committee can focus on the issues of greatest concern to the international community in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Queiroz Duarte (Brazil): I am honoured to speak on behalf of Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden and Brazil — the New Agenda Coalition.

At the outset I wish to express our warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at this year's session. Please accept our best wishes and the assurance of our cooperation.

We welcome the appointment of Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe, and look forward to cooperating with him and his team at the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

In 1995 the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) renewed their commitment to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective nuclear disarmament. They agreed that the objective of universal adherence to the NPT was an urgent priority. At the 2000 NPT Review Conference the States parties agreed on a Programme of Action — the 13 steps — which provides the requisite blueprint to achieve nuclear disarmament. The nuclear-weapon States at that time made an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. They also recognized the principle of irreversibility, to apply to all nuclear disarmament and nuclear-reduction measures.

In the context of these commitments, the New Agenda Coalition is deeply concerned at the lack of progress in implementing the 13 steps on nuclear disarmament to which all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Each article of the NPT is binding on the respective States parties at all times and in all circumstances. All NPT States parties must be held fully accountable with respect to strict compliance with their obligations under the Treaty. The implementation of undertakings therein on nuclear disarmament remains imperative.

The New Agenda Coalition is also concerned about the challenges facing the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The New Agenda Coalition views as a priority achieving universal adherence to the NPT and having India, Israel and Pakistan promptly adhering to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States.

Of deep concern to us is the announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its intention to withdraw from the NPT, and related developments, as well as ambiguities regarding the implementation by States of their respective safeguards obligations towards the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Other particularly disturbing developments are the emerging approaches to the broader role of nuclear weapons as part of security strategies, including rationalizations for the use and development of new types of nuclear weapons. There is a disturbing trend to erase the distinction between conventional weapons and non-strategic nuclear weapons. This trend is among the many horizontal and vertical pressures that are extending the range of the nuclear and related threats that we face.

The New Agenda Coalition welcomes recent developments in the Conference on Disarmament that

would allow the Conference to move from impasse to agreement on a comprehensive programme of work.

The New Agenda Coalition will submit two draft resolutions. The first, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: a new agenda", builds on the previous work of the New Agenda Coalition at the 2000 NPT Review Conference and at the Preparatory Committee's meetings for the 2005 NPT Review Conference. Our second draft resolution, entitled "Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons", builds on resolution 57/58 and is an effort to highlight different aspects of the particular threat posed by tactical nuclear weapons. Reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons should be accorded a higher priority as an important step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is our view that our draft resolutions have the necessary operational flexibility to meet the concerns of all States for which a nuclear-weapon-free world is a sincere aspiration. We invite them all to support our two draft resolutions in a spirit of shared global concern and of collective action in relation to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

A nuclear-weapon-free world is an aspiration and common responsibility of the entire international community. To attain a nuclear-weapon-free world it is vital to prevent nuclear proliferation, and at the same time it is imperative to promote nuclear disarmament. The New Agenda Coalition firmly believes that nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are mutually reinforcing processes, and that there can be no lasting progress in non-proliferation efforts in the absence of commensurate developments in the field of nuclear disarmament.

To ensure the sustainability of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, States must refrain from any action that could lead to a new arms race or could impact negatively on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is also our firm belief that as long as nuclear weapons continue to play a role in security policies the risk of proliferation will continue to haunt us.

Any possibility that nuclear weapons could be used represents a continued risk for humanity. The recent international debate on weapons of mass destruction has only highlighted the fact that the sole guarantee against the use of any weapon of mass destruction anywhere, including nuclear weapons, is their total elimination and the assurance that they will never be used or produced again.

International peace and security is a collective concern requiring collective engagement, and the participation of the international community as a whole is central to the maintenance and enhancement of peace and security.

Multilateralism is the collective will of all countries to act together. In the arena of nuclear disarmament, multilateralism can be undermined by those who choose not to fulfil their non-proliferation obligations. It can also be undermined by those that are under an obligation to disarm and demonstrate leadership and progress, yet fail to do so, and by those States that continue to remain outside the NPT.

The New Agenda Coalition hopes that the Committee will be able to foster a constructive and forward-looking approach to pressing issues in the area of disarmament.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Let me extend my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-eighth session. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you and the Bureau lead the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

The tragic bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Iraq on 19 August 2003 jolted the world and brought the cruel face of terrorism right to the doorsteps of this building. Terrorists could, and probably would, use any means, however barbaric or horrendous, to achieve their ends. That raises the spectre of the possible use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Dozens of media reports revisited many of the threats that had haunted us previously — dirty bombs, mini-nukes, backyard biolabs and so on — and pointed out how new technologies, freer trade and open borders could easily be exploited by those seeking to wreak havoc. Public statements espoused the urgent need to prevent these weapons from being used.

Since we met a year ago the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation has attracted much greater international attention. The threat, as perceived and presented, of weapons of mass destruction and their

means of delivery, resulted in war. The end of the cold war and the ensuing winds of hope, peace and progress had lulled us into complacency. We believed that the threat of days gone by had dissipated. Old nuclear and other rivalries had been overtaken by new friendships and relationships, cooperation, understanding and peace.

Scenarios of the possible consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are indeed frightening. Every August brings to the fore the horrific events at Hiroshima and Nagasaki 58 years ago. In our wildest imagination we could not envisage the human suffering and devastation that modern thermonuclear devices — weapons more than a thousand times more potent than the 1945 devices — could wreak on an urban population. Today that horror even continues to threaten even States and peoples that have bound themselves not to aspire to nuclear weapons, but cannot obtain reliable assurances that these weapons will not be used, or be threatened to be used, against them.

We are also regularly confronted with stark insights into the possible consequences of biological agents being released into the environment, even unintentionally and despite controls. Ordinary people throughout the world are repulsed by these images, and naturally experience anxiety and fear that such a calamity may befall them.

Every year the Committee meets to address these very issues of disarmament, which ordinary people throughout the world are deeply concerned and anxious about. We carry the responsibility of collectively allaying their fears, and have the duty to do our utmost to adequately address the issues before us.

We urge all members to approach our work in a serious fashion and work together so that we can agree collectively on actions that will contribute to and promote international peace and security.

We are faced with a plethora of draft resolutions. Many of them are repetitive, consume most of our valuable time, and add nothing new to the agenda. Years of bureaucratic creativity have produced a proliferation of resolutions on a wide-ranging number of topics. We agree that all issues are important, but we need to prioritize. We need to get back to basics and ensure that the bulk of our time and deliberation in the Committee is spent on issues that could move international security forward on the basis of a consensus between ourselves, or provide a genuine platform of debate on actions for the future. The challenge is to achieve action-oriented draft resolutions that draw the support of all of us, or provide a platform for future work, and that should be implemented when they are adopted.

We urge you, Sir, to consult with the main sponsors of draft resolutions on similar issues to discuss whether they could be merged into consolidated draft resolutions. We also suggest that the main sponsors of draft resolutions that do not reflect significant changes during the year consider tabling their draft resolutions every second or third year, or as appropriate. The aim should be to allow us sufficient time to focus on, and give the required substantive consideration to, the issues that we need to address.

Our record of achievement on some of the most crucial issues is distressing.

Global military expenditure is expected to rise to over $1 trillion this year, while half the world languishes in chronic poverty and deprivation.

There has been no progress on real nuclear disarmament. On the contrary, nuclear weapons seem to be regaining their allure. The nuclear-weapon States cling to their arsenals, are devising new rationales for their use, and are reported to be further exploring the development of new types of devices. More States are working to emulate them, while terrorists are swayed by their rationale for having them. The concept of a second nuclear era, which seeks to revive a lost claim to legitimacy, should be opposed with all our endeavours.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been crippled by the lack of commitment of some of the signatory States. The Conference on Disarmament, which is funded not only by the contributions of its members, but also by the contributions of all the Member States of the United Nations, has done no substantive work for seven years. Its inactivity, which is veiled in its report to the Committee, has prevented the negotiation of a nuclear fissile materials treaty, despite this Committee's agreement that negotiations should proceed, and has prevented work on other priority issues, such as nuclear disarmament, which had also been agreed.

We have not addressed the possible weaponization of space, although we all concede that

this is the next battleground and that prevention is better than cure.

We have not been able adequately to address the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) by strengthening its implementation, although we toiled collectively through many years of negotiation to do so.

We have not managed to collectively address the proliferation of missiles, especially those capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction.

Those are a few of the most vexing issues on which we should collectively be seeking action.

We are halfway through the period between the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the 2005 Review Conference. We have concluded two Preparatory Committee sessions, where the outcome was determined by a Chairperson's summary. We have deliberated on many important issues in the first two sessions, and, in accordance with the decision on improving the effectiveness of the strengthened review process for the NPT, will at the third session and, as appropriate, at a fourth session, taking into account the deliberations and results of the previous sessions, make every effort to produce a consensus report containing recommendations to the Review Conference. A concerted effort by all States parties will be demanded to produce substantive recommendations in accordance with the obligations we all agreed in 2000.

South Africa, along with its partners in the New Agenda Coalition, will put forward two draft resolutions entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: a new agenda" and "Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons". While the operative language in the draft resolution on "Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons" is substantially the same as that in the draft resolution entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", the separate draft resolution is being presented to enhance our view that the further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons should be accorded a higher priority as an important step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, and be carried out in a comprehensive manner. As elaborated by the representative of Brazil, these draft resolutions also build on previous resolutions and take into account developments in the past year. We have been very grateful for the wide support that the resolutions have attracted previously, and trust that we can again count on Member States and civil society to continue working with us to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

It is with deep disappointment and regret that we see yet another year at the Conference on Disarmament end with no substantive work being undertaken. Recent developments at the Conference do, however, hold out the hope that we may have the best opportunity so far to overcome the deadlock. In this regard, we commend the work by the group of five Ambassadors and the flexibility shown by the members of the Conference, particularly China and the Russian Federation, to join a consensus on the proposal put forward by the five Ambassadors. South Africa calls upon those who are still considering this proposal to recognize that within our grasp we have the most realistic chance of getting down to substantive negotiation. We would encourage both the current and forthcoming Presidents of the Conference to vigorously pursue their consultations on the basis of this proposal so as to provide a foundation for the Conference to commence substantive work at the beginning of its 2004 session.

In the area of biological weapons, South Africa remains disappointed that the States parties were unable to conclude their work on strengthening the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention. We remain convinced that the dangers of biological weapons and increasing threats will lead us back to the common understanding that legal measures negotiated in the context of the Convention far surpass any ad hoc or non-binding solutions. While the substantive contribution to international peace and security of the new work being undertaken in terms of the decision agreed to at the Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference remains an open question, we are satisfied that the process reflects a commitment to a multilateral approach.

South Africa welcomes the outcome of the First Chemical Weapons Convention Review Conference and the high level of commitment displayed in the adoption by States parties of the Political Declaration. We look forward to the meeting of States parties later this month and the development of a plan of action on national implementation measures, as agreed under agenda item 7 (c) (v). South Africa will work diligently with all delegations to ensure that the plan of action identifies the problems and constraints being experienced by some States parties, and offers focused and necessary technical support and assistance in order

for them to meet the provisions of article VII of the Convention.

The successful conclusion of the recent First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is testimony to the commitment by States and the non-governmental community to implement and facilitate the 2001 Programme of Action. South Africa commends the Chairperson of the First Biennial Meeting, Ambassador Inoguchi of Japan, for her dedication and leadership, which greatly contributed to the success of the meeting. South Africa welcomes the report (A/58/138) of the Group of Governmental Experts on tracing illicit small Arms and light Weapons and believes that the General Assembly should act on the recommendation of the Group and launch negotiations on an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons. South Africa recognizes and highly appreciates the crucial role played by the Chairperson of the Group of Governmental Experts, Ambassador Rakesh Sood of India, in leading the Group to adopt a consensus report.

The International Action Network on Small Arms has recently commented that the progress towards the implementation of the Programme of Action can at best only be described as modestly positive. Against the background of this sobering assessment, South Africa, Colombia and Japan will again submit a draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The draft resolution will, if adopted, recognize the outcome of the First Biennial Meeting, act upon the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts, set the date and venue for the 2006 Review Conference, and guide further work on the important issue of brokering. Through the decisions proposed in the draft resolution we will, under the auspices of the United Nations, intensify our collective efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the scourge of illicit small arms and light weapons.

South Africa congratulates Thailand on its successful hosting of the Fifth Meeting of States parties to the mine-ban Treaty. The outcome of the meeting in Bangkok has laid a solid foundation for our continued efforts to rid the world of anti-personnel mines and to prepare for the important First Review Conference of the Treaty. South Africa highly appreciates the generous and fitting offer of the Government of Kenya to present Nairobi as the venue for this Review Conference, an offer accepted by the meeting of States parties in Bangkok. South Africa welcomes the nomination of Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria as the President of the First Review Conference, and assures him of South Africa's full support and cooperation in the challenging task that lies ahead of him.

In Africa major peace initiatives have been launched to resolve conflict situations. The use of anti-personnel mines has a debilitating impact on societies involved, even in the periods after the conflicts have been resolved. The legacy of the use of anti-personnel mines is one of shame, with innocent women, children and other civilians falling victim to these weapons, even as they try to re-establish their lives. It is as if these innocents are forced to face a second war with anti-personnel mines, even after the conflict itself has been resolved.

The Review Conference will be held in 2004 during a period that coincides with the seventh anniversary of the signing of this global norm against anti-personnel mines. This provides us with the ideal opportunity not only to critically evaluate our achievements, but also to intensify our efforts to mobilize resources to clear mined areas and assist those who have become victims of this deadly weapon. Thereby we would be setting an agenda that would rapidly lead us to a world free of anti-personnel mines.

The decisions of the Second Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions and Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, which established an intensive programme of work undertaken by the Group of Governmental Experts, has culminated in a draft proposal for a legally binding instrument on explosive remnants of war. South Africa is disappointed that a stronger instrument could not be negotiated, especially with regard to victim assistance. However, we believe that the draft instrument should be fine tuned at the final session of the Group of Governmental Experts and should be adopted as an additional protocol to the Convention by the meeting of States parties in November 2003.

My delegation has noted the 2003 consensus report (A/58/274) of the Group of Governmental

Experts on the continuing operation and further development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Group met in New York this year. Its most significant recommendations, from the perspective of the development of the Register, were that technical adjustments be made to two of the seven categories of conventional arms covered by the Register: to lower the reporting threshold for large-calibre artillery systems from 100 to 75 millimetres and to include man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADS) in category VII, "Missiles and missile launchers". South Africa strongly supports the development of the Register, and hopes that the Group's recommendations will be adopted by consensus.

We have tried for the past few years, both in the First Committee and in the Disarmament Commission, to address the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). The emphasis on this by the overwhelming majority of States reflects the importance that is attached to this issue. The failure of the Open-ended Working Group thus far to agree on the objectives and agenda for the special session is disappointing. The entire disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control scenario has changed dramatically since the 1978 consensus reached at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I). These changes need to be reviewed and taken into account along with the disarmament machinery, which is now outdated and in serious need of an overhaul. South Africa hopes that member States will, with more effort, manage to narrow differences and move forward on the outstanding issues that will enable the convening of an SSOD-IV.

South Africa remains committed to the work of this Committee and all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums so as to achieve the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, and to limit the numbers of conventional weapons to the minimum required for self-defence. While the lack of progress in disarmament is deeply disappointing and a matter of serious concern, South Africa continues to recognize the critical importance of the issues we deal with for international peace and security — not only in our time but also for generations to come. South Africa therefore remains determined to continue to work, singly or in cooperation with other like-minded countries, for the achievement of our collective goals.

The Chairman: Before calling on the next speaker, I again request speakers to limit their statements to 10 minutes for those speaking in their national capacity, and 15 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations or regional groups.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I start by congratulating you, Sir, on behalf of the Argentine delegation on your election to chair the Committee. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. You can count on the full cooperation of my delegation.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the new Under-Secretary-General, Ambassador Abe, and to wish him every success.

We fully support the statements that will be made in the thematic debate by the representatives of Peru, on behalf of the Rio Group, and of Uruguay, on behalf of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) and its associated States. Bearing that in mind, together with the lack of substantive progress in disarmament and international security, we shall be extremely brief and limit ourselves to the following comments.

First, we share the concern of a number of delegations about the paralysis of the so-called disarmament machinery — the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and this First Committee of the General Assembly. Only through a frank dialogue will the necessary political will be found for any reform to adapt these institutions to the new reality.

Secondly, there is no doubt that the challenge posed by terrorism, as a new, real threat on the international scene, introduces a new dimension to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The possibility of terrorist groups gaining access to weapons of mass destruction is a real danger that must not be ignored or underestimated.

Thirdly, as responsible actors of the international community, member States must set aside the status quo in discussions on this subject and adopt a pragmatic approach that can respond to the new challenges. We must strengthen the inspection regimes and pursue verifiable disarmament.

Fourthly, discussions on methodology should not lead to a hardening of the status quo, as was the case in the discussions on convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV).

Fifthly, the new international reality requires effective multilateralism to focus on specific problems. For that it is vital that there be strict observance of legally binding instruments and a strengthening of existing instruments in order to achieve international security. There is no doubt that enforcement of the law and transparency are the basis and foundation of democracy at the global level.

In conclusion, we call on all delegations to join forces and face the challenge that we face. The present reality requires that we now set rhetoric aside and work with greater determination than ever to understand each other's security needs and achieve the peace for which we yearn.

Mr. Goussous (Jordan): At the outset I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-eighth session and wish you every success in discharging the task with which you have been entrusted. We have every confidence in your ability to fulfil your responsibilities.

I also thank the Permanent Representative of Uganda for his efforts as Chairman of the First Committee during the fifty-seventh session.

The growing gap between rich and poor throughout the world continues to fuel inequalities. While the world spent $839 billion in 2001 on defence, millions of people across the globe were struggling to survive well below the poverty line. A continuation of these circumstances will inevitably fuel conflicts throughout the globe.

Small arms are the weapons of choice for today's combatants, because of their ease of use and availability. The supply of limitless quantities of small arms and light weapons in areas of high tension has contributed to the prosecution of numerous civil wars and caused the deaths of countless victims, most of whom are civilians. Moreover, small arms helped to fuel 46 of the 49 largest conflicts of the last decade, and in 2001 were estimated to be responsible for 1,000 deaths a day, more than 80 per cent being of women and children. Also, only 18 million of the 550 million small arms and light weapons in circulation today are used by Government, military, or police forces. Illicit trade accounts for almost 20 per cent of the total small arms trade, and generates more than $1 billion a year. That is why my country has stressed on many occasions the importance of both the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the First Biennial Meeting of States, which made important progress. We welcome the adoption by consensus of the report of the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York from 7 to 11 July.

Jordan supports the continuation of all international and regional efforts to promote multilateralism in disarmament and non-proliferation, and urges the adoption of measures and procedures to remove prohibited weapons from circulation and dispose of them, and to concentrate on economic development and the promotion of peace, under the auspices of the United Nations. Jordan also affirms that political will and a sincere commitment by all parties involved are necessary in order to achieve peace and stability in the world and guarantee that the peace is lasting and comprehensive.

The instability resulting from conflicts in the region of the Middle East calls for intensive cooperation and the adoption of transparent and comprehensive regional and international measures among all States there. It is noteworthy in this context that the General Assembly has over the past two decades called upon all States in the Middle East that had not yet done so, particularly the only State in the region operating nuclear-weapon capabilities, to adhere without delay to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to place all its nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). All States in the Middle East, except Israel, are now parties to the NPT.

In recent decades Jordan has adopted clear policies that have defined its position with respect to disarmament, thereby underlining its support for all initiatives and efforts in that field in the various national, regional and international forums. Jordan considers that the question of disarmament cannot be addressed as an isolated issue or as one to be handled

by individual States; the situation will become increasingly dangerous unless it is addressed through serious and effective regional and international efforts to achieve disarmament and strengthen the concept of multilateralism.

In the field of strengthening multilateralism in disarmament and non-proliferation, Jordan has ratified all the international conventions and treaties related to weapons of mass destruction, the most important of which are: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC); the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC); the Additional Protocol of the IAEA; and the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Moreover, Jordan supports all initiatives aimed at the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

In that context, Jordan is making diligent efforts to make the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction through its effective participation in the technical committee endorsed by the Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs at their 101st session to prepare a project to make the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Jordan's ratification of the conventions and treaties on weapons of mass destruction and its active and positive role in the organizations established for that purpose are clear evidence of Jordan's concern for, and commitment to, international instruments to strengthen security, peace and stability throughout the world.

Jordan's position with respect to the attainment of that objective can be summarized as follows. It involves encouraging the elimination of the nuclear threat from the Middle East region and commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to making the region free of all weapons of mass destruction; proposing practical measures to reduce tension, build confidence and control the arms race in the region in all its forms, under the auspices of the United Nations; accession by all States of the region to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and placing all nuclear installations in the region under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency; strengthening intelligence cooperation and confidence-building measures between the States of the Middle East region and the arms-exporting States of the world; and refraining from any action involving violations of treaties or conventions, or of State sovereignty.

Since 1974 the General Assembly has called for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and the relevant resolution has been adopted by consensus since 1980. Furthermore, in its resolution on the Middle East, the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, as well as the 2000 NPT Review Conference, called upon all States in the region to

> "take practical steps in appropriate forums aimed at making progress towards, inter alia, the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems, and to refrain from taking any measures that preclude the achievement of this objective."

Paragraph 6 of the resolution called upon all States parties to the NPT and, in particular, the nuclear-weapon States, to make the utmost efforts with a view to ensuring the achievement of that goal. Unfortunately, more than eight years after the historical 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and more than three years after the 2000 NPT Review Conference, there is no indication that the effects of such efforts have yet been felt in the region.

As far as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is concerned, we are encouraged by the fact that so far 169 States have signed it, 106 have ratified it and 32 have deposited instruments of ratification. We join other member States in calling on all countries that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty, particularly those 44 States whose ratification is needed for it to come into force.

The fissile material cut-off treaty should be the next logical step in nuclear disarmament, since it is important to prevent fissile material and nuclear waste from falling into the hands of terrorists or other criminals. That is why the Conference on Disarmament has to agree on the programme of work on the fissile material cut-off treaty and to start constructive negotiations on the treaty, among other things.

Jordan has ratified the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel landmines, and this year it destroyed its

entire stockpile. This step reaffirms our commitment to help to eliminate this excessively injurious and inhumane weapon, which has indiscriminate effects, especially on children and other innocent civilians. Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, in her capacity as Patron of the Landmine Survivor's Network, is leading and contributing to the worldwide campaign to rid the world of anti-personnel landmines.

Jordan has been a staunch supporter of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We regard as an indispensable mechanism for achieving transparency in armaments, which leads to confidence-building, especially in conflict-prone regions such as the Middle East. However, we believe that the Register may not be effective unless its scope in the future is enlarged to include military holdings and procurement through national production and weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. We therefore urge the Panel of Governmental Experts to deal with this issue.

Finally, allow me to quote from a statement made by the Holy See in 1976 here at the United Nations:

> "The arms race can kill, though the weapons themselves may never be used ... by their cost alone, armaments kill the poor by causing them to starve."

Mr. Faessler (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I congratulate you, Mr Chairman, on your election, and wish you every success in your difficult task. The long experience and important commitment of your country, and of you personally, in the area of arms control and disarmament will undoubtedly prove to be significant assets in ensuring the success of our work. You can count on the full cooperation of my delegation at all times.

I am also very pleased to see here the new Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Abe, and I should like to thank him in advance for the support that he and his colleagues will be providing to us in our work.

Over recent years the international peace and security environment has changed considerably. The case of Iraq in particular not only underlines the importance of multilateral institutions and instruments for maintaining international peace and security, but also exposes their limitations. As a result, we are compelled to reflect on the possibility of revising these mechanisms or of complementing them with other instruments that are capable of taking into account new challenges such as those posed by international terrorism.

The multilateral institutions and instruments in the area of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation remain vital for ensuring our security. In order to do this they need to be strengthened and to become truly universal. However, this has not yet happened with regard to weapons of mass destruction. This deficiency is further aggravated by the fact that certain States, which are not parties to the instruments in question, are continuing to develop such weapons.

In this context, my country calls on all those States that have not already done so to ratify, as soon as possible, the following agreements: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC); the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC); and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We also call for active support for the corresponding institutions: the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). As for the delivery vehicles for weapons of mass destruction, Switzerland invites all countries that have not already done so to subscribe to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. However, as that Code provides only a partial solution to the problem of delivery systems and their proliferation, it needs to be complemented by a legally binding agreement.

Recent months have amply demonstrated that failure to respect commitments and obligations on weapons of mass destruction threatens seriously to jeopardize international peace and security.

Switzerland deplored the announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it would withdraw from the NPT, and urges it to revoke that decision and return. In the meantime, we call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately resume cooperation with the IAEA and to provide total transparency, in compliance with the obligations set out in the NPT. Furthermore, Switzerland urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cooperate closely with the IAEA with a view to completely and irreversibly dismantling its military nuclear programme. Switzerland furthermore supports the

current diplomatic process, and is willing to contribute to it.

Recent doubts about Iranian nuclear policy cause my country concern. In order to re-establish confidence and reassure the international community as to the strictly peaceful and civilian nature of its nuclear programme, Iran should unconditionally and without delay sign and implement an additional protocol to its safeguard agreement with the IAEA. Until such a protocol is finalized, Switzerland calls on Iran to demonstrate its good will by cooperating more promptly and ensuring complete transparency.

Strengthening the institutions and instruments of disarmament relating to weapons of mass destruction, with complete respect for their implementation, is also the best means of preventing terrorist organizations from gaining access to these. In addition, there is clearly a need to implement, at the national level, effective measures to protect nuclear, chemical and biological installations and materials in order to prevent them from becoming accessible to terrorist organizations.

In the matter of nuclear disarmament, the commitments by the nuclear-weapon States are also indispensable. The lack of progress in this area at the multilateral level, ongoing research efforts to develop new nuclear weapons, and the emergence of new military doctrines cause my country grave concern. It is disappointing that in this area there has been only one positive development in recent years — ratification of the Moscow Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on reducing the number of strategic nuclear warheads. That Treaty is very welcome. However, the efforts by the nuclear-weapon States need to encompass all the components of their nuclear arsenals, including the reduction, even the elimination, of all their tactical weapons. My country favours a multilateral universal agreement to totally ban these weapons.

Switzerland also attaches great importance to implementation of the Programme of Action and 13 practical steps adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. An important element in the Programme of Action is the negotiation and conclusion at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament — the single multilateral negotiating disarmament forum — of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for military purposes. Unfortunately, the prospects for such negotiations are not encouraging. Indeed, for the fifth year in succession the Conference on Disarmament has not managed to adopt a programme of work, despite the laudable efforts of five ambassadors representing different regional groupings. My country supports their proposals and calls on all the member States at the Conference to adopt them as a programme of work so that the negotiations can finally get started.

Biological weapons also pose a real and serious threat. Biotechnology is developing rapidly in both the civilian and military spheres, and as a result the risks of abuse are becoming ever greater. Even though our efforts to negotiate an instrument to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention have not yet borne fruit, Switzerland is confident that the follow-up process that emerged from the last Review Conference will make it possible to improve compliance with the Convention at both the national and international levels. My country also welcomes the proposal of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to launch an international appeal at ministerial level against the abuses of biotechnology. This initiative would have to be based on humanitarian law and be complementary to the BWC follow-up process currently under way. Since 2002 Switzerland has funded a World Health Organization (WHO) project on communicable diseases that are not of natural origin. That project, which also aims to combat bioterrorism, has proved to be a success, and the time appears to be right to invite other interested States to participate.

I should also like to mention the First Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which took place in The Hague this year. My country is satisfied with the progress made since the Convention came into force. However, the time has now come to tackle the final obstacles, such as the inadequate degree of national implementation of this instrument, which has impeded its universality, and inadequate exchange of information about on-site inspections. As for the destruction of weapons, my country will contribute substantial sums to finance chemical weapons destruction programmes in the Russian Federation.

Within the framework of the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), my country attaches great importance to negotiations on explosive remnants of war, and hopes

that an agreement can be reached on a substantial, legally binding instrument.

Switzerland also hopes that all the States parties will be ready to accept the regulation of sub-munitions, in order to reduce, by technical measures, the risk posed by unexploded sub-munitions. Such a solution would undoubtedly have a positive impact on the humanitarian situation in those regions affected by the use of those munitions. Similarly, Switzerland hopes that it will also be possible to find a solution for mines other than anti-personnel mines to satisfy humanitarian concerns.

As for the mine-ban Convention, Switzerland is pleased at the success of the Fifth Conference of States parties, which took place in Bangkok. The Conference noted that considerable progress had been made since the Convention came into force, and gave a new impetus to efforts to achieve its universality, in Asia in particular. Switzerland calls on all countries that have not already done so to ratify the Convention without delay.

Small arms and light weapons are the conventional arms that cause the greatest number of casualties. The results of their excessive use are devastating both in terms of economic and social development and of political stability. If we wish to ensure stability and to promote human security we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to establishing effective instruments to regulate the uncontrolled trafficking in small arms and light weapons, thus contributing to the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action, with regard to which the First Biennial Meeting of States in New York in July was a success. Switzerland in particular has worked in conjunction with France to prepare a draft international instrument for tracing and marking these weapons. We hope that during the current session it will be possible to launch the negotiation process for an international instrument for tracing small arms and light weapons, in accordance with the conclusions of the Group of Governmental Experts appointed by the Secretary-General. If such a process is initiated, Switzerland will be willing to chair the working group set up as a result.

My country is willing to participate in deliberations on the better use of, and improvements to, disarmament and non-proliferation multilateral institutions, such as the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. In this connection, we welcome your initiative, Sir, as Chairman of the First Committee, to hold a special meeting on this issue. We also welcome the initiatives and proposals that have already been put forward on this subject by a number of other States. We look forward to participating actively in the discussions and to making our contribution to them.

Mr. de Rivero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am speaking on behalf of the member States of the Rio Group: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

First, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to direct the work of the First Committee. All the member States of the Rio Group will work with you in order to conclude our session's work successfully. We also congratulate and extend our promise of cooperation to the other members of the Bureau.

There is no doubt that the subject of disarmament is going through difficult times and that the picture is bleak. In addition to traditional problems, others have emerged that further complicate our agenda.

Seven years after its signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) still does not have the necessary number of ratifications to enter into force. The lack of action in the Conference on Disarmament is also regrettable. In recent years it has not been able to reach a single agreement on its programme of work, particularly on nuclear disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, and no use whatsoever is being made of it.

After three years of deliberation, no consensus has been reached in the Disarmament Commission. Nor has it been possible to reach agreement on the objectives and agenda of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

At the last summit of the heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, held in Cusco, Peru, last May, our Presidents declared that it was crucial to strengthen the capacity of the Group to take initiatives in support of the multilateral system for peace, security and development, based on strict compliance with international law and taking into consideration the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Our Group is a permanent mechanism of consultation

and political agreement which, since it was established more than 16 years ago, has sought to promote dialogue and the adoption of concrete actions to preserve peace, strengthen democracy, and promote development in the Latin American region.

With the Treaty of Tlatelolco our region served as a model for the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Treaty's full entry into force confirms that this type of agreement strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime; it is therefore important to encourage the consolidation of all the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The Rio Group is committed to the proposal in the Millennium Declaration to convene an international conference to determine appropriate ways of eliminating the nuclear dangers, and we urge other countries to continue consultations in order to make this a reality.

The Rio Group also reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of international legal instruments in support of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We are participating actively in the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Although we regret the meagre progress towards complete implementation of the 13 measures on nuclear disarmament included in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, we are convinced that it is essential to strengthen and revitalize that document. The third meeting of the Preparatory Committee will take place in New York next year. Such meetings are part of a fundamental process that must be revitalized with concrete inputs and improvements to prepare the ground for the 2005 Conference.

The Rio Group also expresses its concern at the possible development of new nuclear weapons and security doctrines that contemplate their possible use. We therefore endorse the results of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and invite all States to become parties to this important instrument.

The Rio Group is convinced that the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction is the best way to achieve international peace and security. In this context, we hope for progress in the negotiations in Geneva to strengthen the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) with verification measures. We believe that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) represents a significant instrument for achieving disarmament.

The Rio Group is carefully following the initiatives that have been developing regarding protection and security measures against nuclear terrorism, such as the two international conferences on this issue, held in October 2002 in Germany and in March this year in Vienna, where the need to strengthen the technological and physical security of nuclear materials and radioactive sources was acknowledged. The Rio Group considers that these measures are becoming increasingly important in order to avoid the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the possibility of such materials falling into the hands of terrorists or actors who operate outside the law.

With regard to conventional weapons, the member States of the Rio Group have agreed to strengthen bilateral, regional and global measures that promote confidence-building and security, particularly in the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations, where participation in the Register of Conventional Arms represents an important contribution to international peace and security.

We are fully committed to the objectives of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We reiterate our commitment to making our region a zone free of that type of weapon, and welcome the results of the last meeting of States parties to the Convention, which took place in Bangkok in September. We call on the international community to give affected countries the resources and technology they need to eradicate this type of weapon and to give humanitarian assistance to the victims.

The member States of the Rio Group strongly condemn the indiscriminate use and manufacture of mines by non-State actors, which hinders the consolidation of a hemisphere free of anti-personnel mines. The Rio Group urges the international community to commit itself to preventing these

individuals or illegal groups from using these deadly devices.

The Rio Group considers that the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons is a problem of global magnitude that is connected with terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of violence that threaten peace and security in the majority of our countries. It is a real problem, common to us all, that needs to be eradicated. We reiterate our deep concern over the illicit traffic in these weapons, and renew our commitment to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as our commitment to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

The member States of the Rio Group participated actively in the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in July this year. We shared our national reports and exchanged valuable information with a view to implementing the Programme of Action in a concrete manner. The Rio Group welcomes the establishment of the Andean Plan to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the Andean Community in their Decision 552 when they met in Quirama, Colombia, in June.

The member States of the Rio Group welcome the agreement reached by the Central American Governments in the meeting of the Central American Security Commission held in Belize on 5 September. The aim is to implement an urgent programme to limit and control arms in the region. That security agreement includes arms limitation in order to reach a reasonable balance of forces, promote stability, mutual confidence and transparency, and prevent illegal armed groups from gaining access to such weapons.

In conclusion, the member States of the Rio Group wish to express their appreciation of the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is located in Lima, Peru. The Centre has endorsed several regional disarmament initiatives, encouraged discussions on security, and contributed to the coordination of the efforts of the United Nations for peace and security in our region.

Mr. Akinsanya (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation first extends warm felicitations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We have no doubt that with your deep experience and the deep commitment of your country you will steer our work in this session to a very successful conclusion. My delegation assures you and your Bureau of its full support and cooperation in your task.

We are also delighted to see Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe, and we thank him very much for his introductory statement, which contains very useful guides to our work.

This meeting is being held at a time when the international community is faced with increasingly divergent views on how best to address the issues of arms control and disarmament. The direct effect of this growing disagreement has been a lack of progress in disarmament. The situation has been complicated by recent developments on the international political scene, which have, regrettably, rendered the prospects for accelerating progress in disarmament even more remote. Sadly, the entire scenario is being played in an international environment already characterized by the increased acquisition of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, the widespread accumulation and use of illicit small arms and light weapons, and the threat of international terrorism. The consequences of these developments are now being felt throughout the world. We are witnessing the rapid erosion of the optimism that was generated in the international community by the successful conclusion during the past decade of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines.

We must acknowledge that there are strong reasons for the loss of faith by the international community in the disarmament process. As we all know, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not entered into force, due to the failure of some States parties to ratify it, in particular those States whose ratification is mandatory for its entry into force. The negotiations to conclude a compliance mechanism for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) remain

inconclusive. The Chemical Weapons Convention still lacks much-needed universality, and the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, has continued to fail to make progress on substantive issues before it. Similarly, the Disarmament Commission this year failed for the first time to live up to expectations as the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that makes concrete recommendations on specific issues in the field of disarmament. This year also witnessed the failure of member States to achieve consensus on the objectives and agenda for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV), leading to the collapse of the working group set up for that purpose.

The Nigerian delegation believes that nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind. The most effective means of achieving nuclear disarmament should therefore be the commencement of multilateral negotiations leading to the early conclusion of a convention on the total elimination of nuclear weapons. As a first step towards the realization of this objective, nuclear-weapon States should make a commitment to immediately stop the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of ensuring that the nuclear disarmament process is irreversible, transparent and verifiable. My delegation also stresses that the presumption of indefinite possession of nuclear weapons by some countries cannot be compatible with sustaining the non-proliferation regime and the goal of maintaining international peace and security. It is therefore our belief that, unless the major Powers show sufficient flexibility and practical commitment to nuclear disarmament, the overall disarmament process will continue to be deadlocked.

The Nigerian delegation reaffirms its belief in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a vital instrument in the maintenance of international peace and security. The delegation therefore endorses the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which contains practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty, including the unequivocal commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones play an important role in the maintenance of regional peace and security. For this reason, my delegation underlines the need to consolidate the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and to establish new zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. In this regard, we express our concern that the Treaty of Pelindaba is yet to enter into force, seven years after it was opened for signature. The Nigerian delegation therefore calls for the early ratification of the Treaty by States signatories, to ensure its entry into force as soon as possible.

The existence of the broad structure of disarmament and arms control agreements is a direct result of non-discriminatory multilateral negotiations. The ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament can only be achieved on the basis of universal, multilateral and non-discriminatory negotiations. Multilateral diplomacy therefore remains the surest path to achieving international cooperation and making progress in the field of disarmament and arms control. In recognition of this fact, the Nigerian delegation reaffirms its absolute commitment to the promotion of multilateralism in the field of disarmament as an essential way to strengthen international peace and security, and further calls on all member States to show similar commitment to the principle of multilateralism in addressing issues of common interest.

The Nigerian delegation is deeply concerned about the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, because it constitutes a major impediment to the peace, stability, security and economic development of many developing countries, especially in Africa. As we are all aware, these arms continue to have devastating effects on the African continent as a result of their capacity to fuel and prolong conflicts. The Committee is no doubt aware of the millions of lives lost, and the humanitarian crisis created in the region as a result of their illicit use. In recognition of this unfortunate situation, my delegation wishes to reiterate President Olusegun Obasanjo's call on the international community during the General Assembly's general debate two weeks ago for the conclusion of negotiations on a legally binding international instrument to regulate the supply of such weapons to non-State actors.

While reaffirming our commitment to the obligations undertaken in the Programme of Action of

the 2001 United Nations Conference on small arms, the Nigerian delegation welcomes the outcome of the First Biennial Meeting of States on small arms and light weapons, which took place in New York last July, and looks forward with hope to the next Biennial Meeting in 2005 and the Review Conference the year after. We note with satisfaction that the Group of Governmental Experts set up by the Secretary-General to study the feasibility of developing an international instrument for marking and tracing small arms and light weapons has successfully completed its work. My delegation takes this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for giving Nigeria the opportunity to serve in the Group.

Nigeria has taken note of the success achieved by the world community in the fight against landmines since the entry into force of the 1999 Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines. In this connection, my delegation welcomes the successful conclusion of the Fifth Meeting of States parties to the Convention, held in Bangkok last month, just as we acknowledge the positive role that civil society — in particular, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines — has continued to play in this important area. We regret to note, however, that in spite of the success achieved so far by the international community in dealing with the problem, landmines continue to claim victims on the African continent. In many post-conflict situations in Africa these mines result in horrific human suffering and hamper economic development and national reconstruction. Nigeria underlines the crucial importance of providing international assistance to mine-affected States in clearing anti-personnel mines placed on their territories, and the need for care and rehabilitation, including social and economic integration of mine victims. The international community should give urgent attention to the need to curb the indiscriminate use of mines in the various regions of the world. We also urge all States that have signed but not ratified the Convention to ratify it as soon as possible.

Finally, 10 days ago, on 26 September 2003, Nigeria successfully launched its first national satellite into orbit at the space centre in Plestek, Russian Federation. The satellite will assist in gathering data for seismic and soil studies, meteorological information, surveillance of oil pipelines and monitoring of air space. The launch of the satellite is a demonstration of Nigeria's strong belief in and commitment to the principle of the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes for the benefit of mankind. We believe, as most countries do, in the constructive application of the vast, almost limitless, resources of nature to human needs. In order to guarantee the greatest benefit of outer space to the peoples of all nations, the international community has a responsibility to future generations to prevent an arms race in outer space. We therefore urge all member States to continue to commit themselves to the preservation of outer space for peaceful purposes only.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your unanimous election to preside over the deliberations of the First Committee. Our felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau. Let me also express our appreciation to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his lucid statement on various disarmament and international security issues.

We are meeting at a time of new challenges and new threats to global peace and security. While there has been some progress, it is an unfortunate reality that the disarmament scene is in disarray. Considerable effort will be needed in multilateral forums to address the numerous issues on our agenda and to bring them to a successful conclusion.

My delegation is deeply concerned over the declining role and diminishing contributions of multilateralism to disarmament and international security. It is undeniable, however, that multilateralism is a guarantor of legitimacy and democracy in tackling the global problems confronting us. Without multilateral negotiations it would not be possible to address today's security concerns, because multilateral approaches offer the only legitimate and lasting solution. There are no realistic alternatives.

The problems posed by proliferation, nuclear terrorism, technology transfer and the safety of nuclear material and related facilities are inextricably interlinked with global security. Consequently, they are not susceptible to a selective and piecemeal approach, and need to be addressed concurrently, equitably and comprehensively. To insulate nuclear disarmament from this equation indefinitely will certainly run counter to international legal obligations and political commitments. We should move this agenda item forward under multilateral auspices at a time when progress is long overdue.

Most important, efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament continue to be undermined by the persistence of narrowly conceived strategic doctrines and by unilateral coercive measures in pursuit of national security interests. We are also very much concerned about a new, untenable doctrine of pre-emption, even against non-nuclear States, and by an expanded scope for the use of nuclear weapons. Other worrisome trends, such as efforts to modernize existing arsenals and to create new types of nuclear weapons, have emerged. Perhaps one of the most frightening is the possibility that weapons of mass destruction may fall into the hands of non-State actors.

In the multilateral forums there is no sign of movement. The Disarmament Commission concluded its 2003 session without concrete proposals to advance either nuclear disarmament or confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. In the meantime, the prolonged stalemate at the Conference on Disarmament continues to be a source of deep concern. For more than seven years the Conference has been paralysed by its inability to agree on a programme of work. My delegation shares the sense of frustration and desperation among its members following the latest failure to make a breakthrough to end the stalemate. A number of concrete proposals have been initiated and introduced in the recent past in an attempt to overcome the impasse in the Conference. They include the proposal by the "five Ambassadors", as amended. My delegation is of the view that the proposal merits our serious consideration, since it offers sensible and positive suggestions for such a breakthrough. In this regard, it is necessary to encourage all members of the Conference on Disarmament to show their genuine goodwill and flexibility so that a compromise can be found and the Conference can get back to its business, starting a substantive process which will lead to the conduct of negotiations on issues of common, global concern at next year's session.

The emergence of new and advanced technologies that are now appearing rapidly and diffusing in less controllable ways, is further compounding the problems of the current international security environment. In an age of globalization, increased communications, porous borders and the continuing growth of networking to acquire certain technologies, such advances will facilitate the obtaining of the wherewithal for these weapons, thereby lowering the threshold of nuclear proliferation. Thus the non-proliferation regime based on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) faces unprecedented challenges. How these challenges are dealt with will determine not only its future but also the international security environment. The legitimacy of any action concerning non-proliferation will suffer as long as nuclear-weapon States disregard their obligations and responsibilities, which are yet to be translated into concrete action in carrying forward the disarmament process.

Since the adoption of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, there has been a lack of progress in implementing the 13 practical steps, which are widely regarded as the requisite blueprint and a realistic approach for nuclear disarmament. Regrettably, some of them have been abandoned or superseded, and many of these steps have been ignored. There has been little change in the positions of the nuclear-weapon States on the critical issues. Consequently, there is a creeping sense of pessimism and the future looks bleak.

The third session of the NPT Preparatory Committee, to be held in April 2004, will be of critical importance. Hence, we should engage in a serious and in-depth discussion of not only the 1995 decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, but also the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. If indeed we are to make substantive progress and look forward to a successful outcome of the 2005 Review Conference, we should first acknowledge the NPT's shortcomings and strive to achieve a more equitable regime that will address the legitimate interests of the vast majority of States parties to the Treaty, which have fulfilled their commitments. The Treaty's credibility and effectiveness will be restored by reducing incentives to acquire nuclear weapons; addressing the security concerns of all States; complying with legal and political commitments; establishing a mechanism to implement the NPT obligations; and ensuring that non-proliferation and the disarmament of nuclear weapons dovetail and move in a common direction.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains an indispensable goal for maintaining the integrity of the NPT. In this regard, together with other Non-Aligned Movement member countries, we have stressed the significance of achieving universal adherence to the

CTBT, including by all the nuclear-weapon States which, inter alia, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, we also believe that if the objectives of the Treaty are to be fully realized the continued commitment of all State signatories — especially the nuclear-weapon States — to nuclear disarmament will be essential.

While we welcome the Moscow Treaty as an important contribution to international peace and security, we cannot but recognize that it lacks most of the standard provisions of a bilateral nuclear arms control treaty or any reference to an exchange of data or any verification mechanism. In this connection, we call on the United States and the Russian Federation to continue taking further steps to improve the Treaty so that it will adhere to the principles of irreversibility, transparency and verifiability, which will have far-reaching ramifications for the future of genuine nuclear arms reductions and their elimination.

Notwithstanding the setbacks in nuclear and related issues, we welcome the progress made with regard to chemical weapons. Efforts to bring the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) closer to universal adherence have made a modest advance. While efforts to conclude a verification protocol of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) have collapsed, an agreement has been reached to hold a series of annual meetings between 2003 and 2005 basically to discuss ways and means at the national level of effectively implementing the Convention. We hope that these efforts will contribute to the success of the 2006 Review Conference.

Positive developments have also continued in regional arms control and disarmament efforts in many parts of the globe. It is our expectation that Central Asia will soon become the fifth nuclear-weapon-free zone, thus increasing the number of such zones in the world. Significantly, it will be the first such zone north of the equator, and this was the first time that negotiations for establishing such a zone were carried out under the auspices of the United Nations. As regards the Bangkok Treaty, some of the nuclear-weapon States have yet to accede to its Protocol, an essential prerequisite for the unfettered effectiveness of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Consultations are continuing between the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the nuclear-weapon States concerned. Their successful culmination will reinforce the status of the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas as nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In the field of conventional weapons, my delegation was pleased to note the successful conclusion of the First Biennial Meeting mandated by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It provided a new momentum, a more supportive global climate for the implementation of the Programme of Action, and new information on key questions such as sources, supply routes and networks. These advances should be helpful in the collective efforts of the global community to prevent the illicit trade and transfer of these arms. However, international assistance to facilitate a productive partnership for effective action needs to be strengthened to achieve that objective.

Finally, my delegation wishes to draw attention to General Assembly resolution 57/61, adopted without a vote, on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which calls on Member States to reach a consensus on its objectives and agenda, including the possibility of establishing a preparatory committee. To our profound disappointment, consensus has eluded us. Needless to say, these efforts must continue; indeed, they must be intensified, because the fourth special session on disarmament offers an opportunity to review, from a perspective more in tune with the current international situation, the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament and to mobilize the international community and public opinion in favour of the elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and of the control and reduction of conventional weapons. We have a comprehensive set of proposals submitted by the member States during our three substantive sessions this year. Bringing all these ideas, concepts and approaches together will not be an easy task, but, given flexibility and a spirit of compromise, we remain confident of success in coming to grips with them.

In conclusion, my delegation joins many other Member States in our concerted efforts to bring about comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including the General Assembly. As one of its Main Committees, the First Committee should be accorded renewed attention regarding its role and functioning. We intend to participate constructively in these endeavours and thereby to make our contribution to its increased efficiency and effectiveness.

Mr. Alcalay (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Venezuelan delegation, I offer our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to conduct the Committee's work. We also extend those congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. We assure you, Mr. Chairman, of our sincere cooperation in the successful fulfilment of your important responsibilities.

My delegation supports the statement made by the delegation of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group, of which we are a member. Nonetheless, I should like to state the position of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on very important items under consideration by this Committee related to preserving international peace and security.

General and complete disarmament is an objective enshrined in the Venezuelan Constitution of 1999. For that reason my country is committed to disarmament, and participates actively in all competent forums in this field whose work is aimed at confidence-building, creating a culture of peace, and increasing the security of the entire international community, under the auspices of the United Nations.

Consistent with that position, my country aspires to the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as agreed by the Conference of the parties in 2000. In this connection, we support the creation of a legally binding instrument by which the nuclear Powers would make an unrestricted pledge not to use, and not to threaten the use of, nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States parties to this Treaty, and to act in compliance with article VI of the NPT, with a view to reducing their nuclear weaponry for the benefit of international peace and security. Likewise, we hope that the 13 practical steps agreed at the Conference will be implemented.

Last year our country became a party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Our support for this Treaty and for its prompt entry into force reflects the objective of providing our societies and the international system with a higher level of security, as the arms race endangers the very survival of humankind.

We welcome the reaching of agreements on nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world, aimed at strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation process, which has gradually spread to different regions. These zones help to promote international peace and security, and we hope that other regions will join in this type of initiative.

In connection with the peaceful uses of outer space, we reiterate our support for the proposal by China and Russia to create a legal, international convention on the prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space and the use or threat of use of force against objects in outer space. We consider outer space to be the heritage of humankind, which means that it should benefit not only those countries with space technology, but all countries.

We believe that the indiscriminate use of biological and chemical weapons represents a danger to all humanity. We therefore support the strengthening of the two Conventions on this subject.

We believe that weapons of mass destruction represent a real danger to the international community, and therefore we should avoid their falling into the hands of terrorists who want to intimidate and to impose barbarity. I emphasize here that in connection with terrorism and organized transnational crime, which we vigorously condemn, my country has just deposited three instruments of ratification of the following: the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings; the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Our Foreign Minister deposited them on the occasion of this fifty-eighth session.

Also as a measure of confidence-building for non-proliferation, my country is a party to the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. Our Organization has called on the signatory States to hold a second meeting here, at its headquarters. We urge States that are not yet parties to the instrument to adhere to it.

We are concerned about the global increase in trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and in the indiscriminate use of these weapons, in violation of the norms contained in the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. This problem must be approached comprehensively, in a well-balanced way, taking into account the specific circumstances and experiences of each country or

region. In implementation of the Programme of Action, Venezuela last year enacted a disarmament measure and it has to date destroyed hundreds of such weapons that were illegally held. In December 2002 our Government enacted a law on national security.

We support the continuing efforts of the international community to bring about the destruction and eradication of anti-personnel mines in various parts of the world. These mines remain a threat to peoples that have experienced conflicts. In particular, they claim innocent civilian lives, and they are a danger to those who reside in areas where they have been used as combat weapons. We are pleased to say that our country plays a part in the Organization of American States (OAS) Assistance Program for demining in Central America. In Venezuela we have destroyed more than 41,522 mines that were in the arsenals of the national armed forces.

Lastly, in connection with transparency and the reduction of military expenditures, my country has supported in international forums, summits and meetings at the highest level, a reduction of defence expenditures and an allocation of those resources to social objectives, where the majority of our countries have great weaknesses, which cause social upheaval and contribute to creating and complicating international conflicts.

The Government of Venezuela has proposed the creation of an international humanitarian fund which would obtain moneys from, inter alia, a reduction of military expenditures. The fund would be used to alleviate conditions of poverty, to improve the socio-economic conditions of our peoples. Thus it would not only give a new impetus to disarmament but at the same time it would be a way to fight poverty and try to eliminate it, one of the fundamental objectives of our Organization.

The disarmament process in all its aspects is closely related to peace and international security, and our goal must be to achieve a more secure, peaceful and prosperous world for our peoples.

The Chairman: I shall now call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, the number of interventions in exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item. The first intervention in the exercise of the right of reply should be limited to 10 minutes and the second should be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Jon Yong Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to express its regret over the distorted and prejudiced pictures conjured up by some delegations in their statements concerning the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. My delegation categorically rejects their allegations.

The nuclear issue is in essence an outcome of the hostile policy of the United States to isolate and stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea politically, economically and militarily. The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula was triggered and made more tense by United States nuclear threats towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. If the United States had not deployed its nuclear plans for the Korean peninsula, and had not threatened the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with a nuclear pre-emptive strike, the nuclear issue would not be raised on the Korean Peninsula. The United States has listed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a target of a nuclear pre-emptive strike, under its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

That being the situation, our effort to have a deterrent to that United States attempt deserves to be called the exercise of the right to self-defence, which is not against international law on the sovereignty of a sovereign country. Any assertion that the United States can threaten and attack other countries with its nuclear weapons, while other countries cannot have nuclear weapons, although exposed to the threat of nuclear attacks from the United States, is nothing but propagandist logic that can never be acceptable to any independent sovereign State.

Some representatives this morning did not say a single word about the United States nuclear threat and its nuclear weapons development: instead, they expressed concern of a unilateral, one-sided nature. Such high-handed acts and unfair behaviour will not help to resolve the issue.

As for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-

Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), that is an exercise of sovereignty recognized by the Treaty itself. The NPT was used as a means of leverage and pressure by the United States to stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Even the International Atomic Energy Agency, forsaking its impartiality, sided with the United States in its attempts to stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Under such circumstances, we were compelled to exercise our legitimate right to declare, under article X of the NPT, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's withdrawal from the Treaty in order to defend the sovereignty of our country.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea regards independence as its lifeline. If small countries do not adhere firmly to their independent stand, they can neither defend their sovereignty of the country nor ensure the peace and stability of the world.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has already made its position clear: we will abandon our nuclear programme if the United States clearly indicates, through the conclusion of a non-aggression treaty, its intention of peacefully coexisting with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and proves with deeds that it has changed its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

If those countries which made unfair remarks about the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States are truly interested in a fair settlement of that issue, they should properly understand the true facts and urge the United States to change its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

My delegation also hopes that the First Committee will consider all other related issues from this standpoint.

The Chairman: I remind delegations that the deadline for the closure of the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items is 6 p.m. today

I also remind members of the need for punctuality. My intention will be to start meetings on time at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. As I mentioned during one of our organizational meetings, punctuality is not an end in itself, but, rather, a means to show respect for one another. We will all be under time pressure during this session, and to facilitate the smooth running of our meetings it is of the utmost importance that they start on time.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.